



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

JUN 05 2009

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Honorable William J. Goodling
98 Main Street
Seven Valleys, PA 17360

Dear Mr. Goodling:

Thank you for your letter to Secretary Arne Duncan expressing concern about the proposed elimination of funding for the Even Start Family Literacy Program in the President's FY 2010 Budget Request. Your letter was referred to the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education for review, and I am pleased to respond.

We understand your concerns about the literacy needs of many of the lowest-income parents, and we also support your view that parents can make a big difference in the lives of their young children. The Department feels strongly that providing parenting education, adult education, and early childhood education are vital to the success of low-income families. However, the Department did not request funding for Even Start because those services are already being provided through larger programs such as Head Start, Early Head Start, Early Reading First, Title I, and Adult Education. We understand that no program combines family literacy services in the way that Even Start does; nevertheless, the program supports only a small number of grants nationwide and we feel that it provides services that can be more effectively and efficiently provided through other programs.

Thank you for sharing some of the positive State evaluations of Even Start. However, at this time, the program lacks clear data showing the effectiveness of the program on a national scale. Both President Obama and Secretary Duncan have promised to eliminate programs that have not demonstrated effectiveness. In developing the FY 2010 Budget, the Department requested considerable increases in funding for early childhood, elementary, and adolescent literacy, through requested increases in the Early Reading First and Striving Readers programs. We have also proposed increases in funding for Title I early literacy, and a new program of Early Childhood Challenge Grants to help States improve infrastructure for early childhood education. In addition, the Budget includes a \$74 million increase for Adult Education grants to States.

Literacy is one of the top priorities of this Administration, and we will make every effort to consider the needs of families as we develop and implement the Department's literacy initiatives. We will also work closely with States, Tribal and Migrant Even Start programs to help them transition to other funding sources, in the event that the program is eliminated.

Thank you for your commitment to family literacy services and to the Even Start program. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide any additional assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph C. Conaty".

Joseph C. Conaty
Delegated Authority to Perform the Functions and
Duties of the Assistant Secretary for Elementary and
Secondary Education

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Please, please, please, don't let this Administration make the same mistakes all Administrations from Johnson thru the last Bush Administration have made. All seemed to think if you spend more money and begin at an earlier age, you can substitute government programs for the parent being the child's first and most important teacher. They seemed to believe the child will do well if you leave the parent behind. We spent 300 billion dollars on Head Start and Title I programs and have proved it doesn't work. Our drop-out rate keeps climbing. 50% of our large school-districts can't graduate 50% of their students - most if not all would have participated in both programs. 75% of young people sitting in prison are high-school drop-outs.

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In your 2nd. paragraph, I would like you to show me the serious family literacy programs in Head Start, Early Head Start, Early Reading First and Title I. Lip service only !!! You say it supports only a small number of grants. Obviously if funding is reduced from \$224 million (a drop in the bucket compared to the programs you mention) the number of grants drop even though this is the only program that requires local matching efforts.

If you leave the parent behind the child is already a 'drop-out' waiting to happen.

If the parent is not prepared to be the child's first and most important teacher the child will struggle and give up.

Incidentally, as a young sup't. of schools I tried the 'Striving Learners' approach with Title I money. It didn't work then and won't work now.

Excuse the scribble, I don't type and even scribble more when I get emotional.

Sincerely,
 Bill Goodling
 Former House Ed. Chair.